

in conversation with catherine stockhausen



Photos by Violeta Bjelica

Could you talk about how you got into being a photographer in the first place and what your earlier years were like as a photographer?

I think I got into it because my father had a lot of photography equipment at home and would take pictures of my brother and I with a bit of lighting and a bit of nice gear. So I got interested in it and I took pictures and took some kid courses, and then in high school, I took pictures for the yearbook and then I really got interested in it. So I went to art school, the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and in the foundation year that everyone has to do, photography is one of the courses and I really took to it. So for the remainder of my BFA, I took every photography course there was and it became my thing.

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When you're doing band photography, like for concerts, do you have any specific memories of what the nightlife was like there or moments with the bands or people that would frequent concerts?

Yeah, there were not too many clubs, and I would say they were all in walking distance. There would never be a night where two bands you wanted to see were playing on the same night. There was a monolith community, so whoever was playing, everyone would just go to it, so you'd see the same people. Certainly when I started going to shows, you just went to whatever music there was playing, so hardcore shows or— I never went to too many folk shows, or traditional Nova Scotia music shows. But within rock, pop, indie, punk, everyone went to whatever was happening. There's a great underage scene, because I was underage when I started going to shows. Club Flamingo was a bar that would have a lot of shows with local bands. They had Two Dollar Tuesdays, which I'm trying to remember— I don't think those were all-ages, but they definitely would have put on earlier all-ages shows. There was a big all-ages scene.

AND BECAUSE OF THAT, MORE PEOPLE IN MORE DISCIPLINES ENTERED THAT SCENE.

As I was researching into the stuff you've done, I saw that you co-created the Snapped Crackling Pop exhibit for the visual side of the Halifax scene. Could you talk about why you wanted to put that exhibit together and how you went about curating it?

I think at a certain point it did become evident that Halifax music was getting a lot of attention, and because of that, more people in more disciplines entered that scene. So printmakers, illustrators, photographers, sculptors, video artists, painters, a lot of people made Halifax music adjacent art, and a lot of people around the school at NSCAD, especially poster design. There was a fellow named Scott Tappen who did some amazing posters for shows around town. My friend Lukas Pearse and I, he was also a NSCAD student and musician, we thought about this, and between the two of us we had most of the contacts we needed. He knew a lot of people from the past who had been designing flyers for decades, and we put a call out and got a lot of interest and approached the Anna Leonowen's Gallery at NSCAD. I think we were both still going there at the time, or maybe not, I can't remember, and put it all together and then threw a big party and it was fun.

I have a few photoshoots that I wanted to ask you about the story behind. The Local Rabbits' *Basic Concept* cover, where was that taken and why were they on horses?

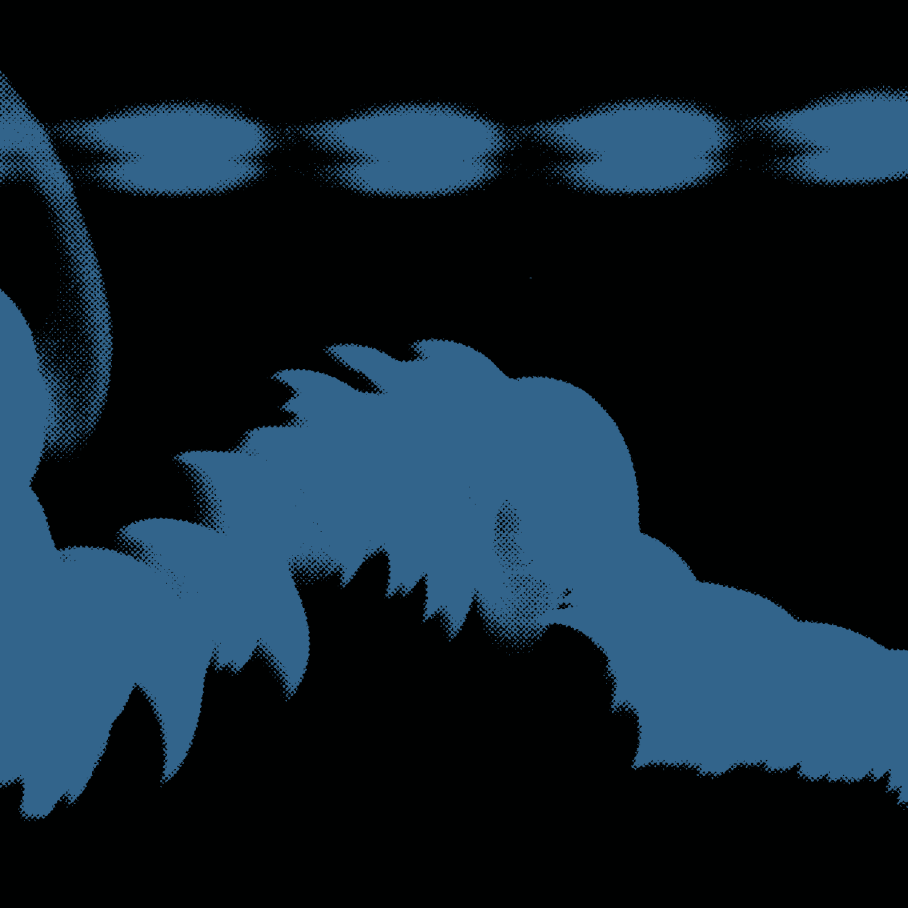
[Laugh] I actually went to Montreal. I think it was January 2nd of that year. It was very, very cold, the kind of cold when you breathe in through your nose your nostrils stick together. I remember that, and there was snow everywhere. They had the idea for the horses. I don't think they had anything particular in mind. They liked the idea of being on horses. I met some band they liked from the past who shoots on horses, so there was nothing we were referencing. So I guess they had gotten in touch with this farm and they got up on the horses and then we spent a lot of time walking around, and that one was not easy to do anything to compose because you can't really control the horses, so I just ran around and circled them and snapped all sorts of shots. We had tons of pictures from that, and then I remember the light was really strong and the back light was really nice around the horses' hair and their hair, and I got that angle and they were coming over a hill and the light was coming. I also shot it on slide film and process it as print film, and that's where you get those colours. This is way before digital and filters. This was all on film. So it was a bit of an experiment. You never know what you're going to get. But I really liked that shoot, and I was happy with what I got.

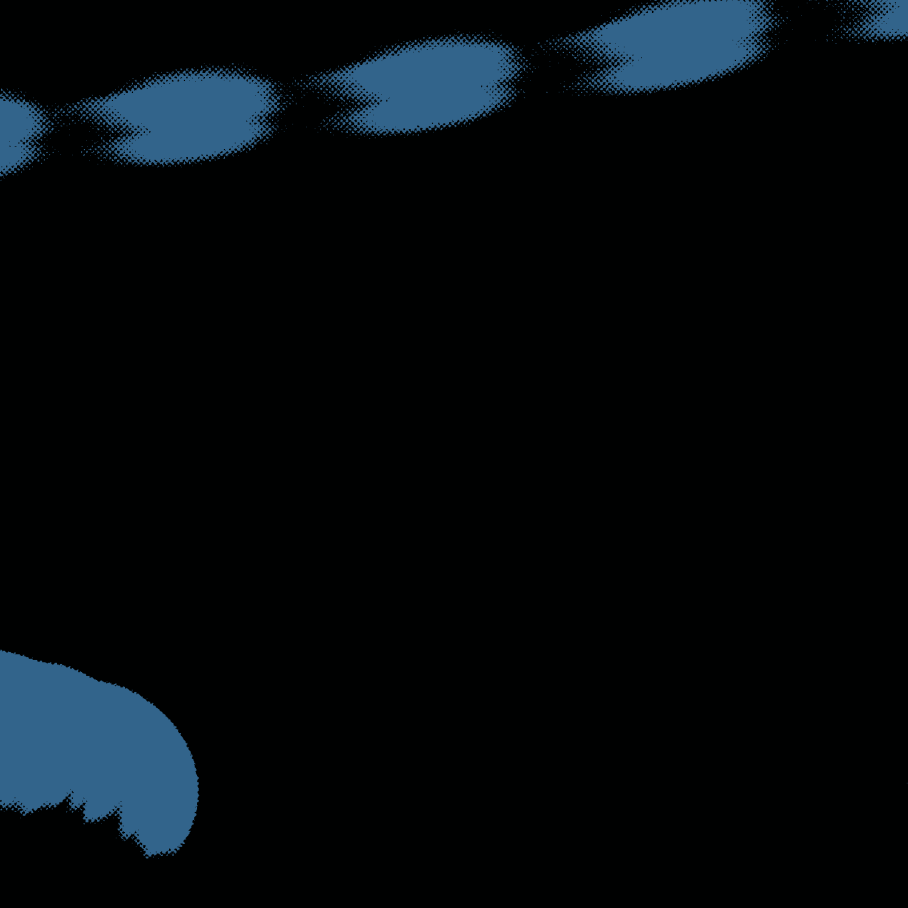




And then the Plumtree *Mass Teen Fainting* cover, whose house is that? I just assumed they took that photo from somewhere else.

No, that was a house in Halifax. They had picked it out. I don't even know if we knew whose house it was. [Laugh] probably there might have been some laws broken there, I don't know [laugh]. But we went out at night. They knew the house. They thought it looked kind of haunted, and we just stood out on the street. They were all with me because we took some other photos that day of them in the shower and everything. They wanted a haunted viewing. So the shower photo, I think the shower photo's in the album. If it's not, we used it for promo, but I put them all in the shower to reference *Psycho*, and then that was just a downtown Halifax haunted-looking house.





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And then the *No Class* cassette compilation from 1993. I was more so wondering about the bands that were on that compilation, I'm assuming those were school bands, like new ones in the scene?

Oh yeah. So my friend Chris Trowbridge, who we both were at CKDU together, we both had radio shows. He might have been the station manager at that point. He was from Toronto, but he went out to Halifax to go to Dal(housie) and then dropped out of Dal and kept living in Halifax, and he really loved the music scene there and he loved discovering young kids' bands. So I think he and a guy named Wayne Mason put the call out for bands, and then I think Plumtree was on that? A band called Bunk, maybe. But a lot of the music was kids that were still in high school, for sure.

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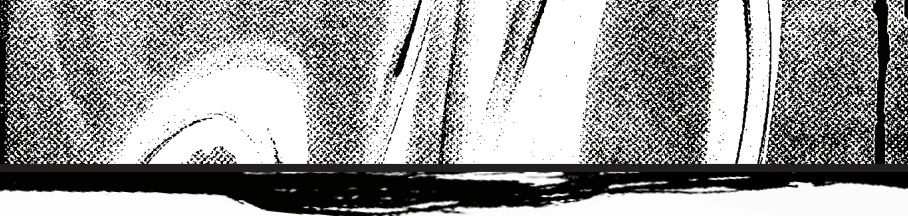
Do you remember anything specifically about those bands? I have a few of them listed there, there was— Yeah, remind me who's on it.— There was Madhat, Deep Woods, Potbelly, Liquid, Bunk, and then there were a few others, but I didn't list them here.

Madhat, I think they were from Lunenburg, Bridgewater. Bunk was a downtown Toronto band. I remember we all really liked Bunk for whatever reason. I think maybe we liked their flyers that they put up. They were these young guys with an attitude and I end up shooting them as a band later on. They might have won a contest for me to shoot them. I could be getting them mixed up with another band, and I shot Madhat as well. I did have a radio show at the time on CKDU, as did Chris, and as did Way(ne), I think a lot of people did. So we play these bands on our radio show and then I would shoot these bands for jobs and then we'd work on putting these bands' music out. So again, just small community, everyone did multiple things that weren't even what they made money doing, and the community came together and really tried to support everyone in every way.



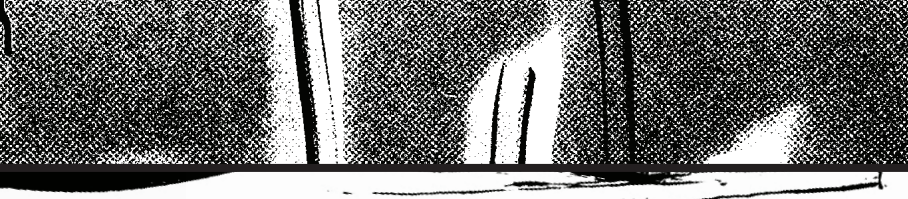
I was also wondering about the Stinkin' Rich seven-inch single ["Stolen Bass"] where everyone's all dressed in suits and it's like a murder scene. What was it like putting that shoot together?

Oh God, I think it was at the Lord Nelson hotel and we somehow found a room that they'd rent out by the hour, probably for different purposes than what we were using them for. I don't think we talked to anyone about what we were doing at the hotel. We may have brought our own sheets and then a lot of chocolate sauce. All that was chocolate sauce meant to look like blood. It was obviously some sort of reference to Scorsese films like *Goodfellas*, probably. I think it was Rich's concept. An old play on Murderecoreds I think was a consideration. I do look back on that shoot. It was fun and we got good photos and looking back I would never do that again [laugh] just like [unintelligible] guns and stuff. I don't think any of us would think that was a good idea now, but we were young.



You also worked on the “Rugged Operator” music video, right? You seem to have a lot of involvement in some of those hip hop bands. Why do you think there is that crossover between rock and hip hop in the scene?

Well, it’s interesting because there was a lot of hip hop in Halifax that there wasn’t a crossover. It was a completely separate, thriving hip hop scene, and I think the hip hop that I had anything to do with was Hip Club Groove were on Murderecords. Rich, Stinkin’ Rich, Buck 65, Rich Terfry, whatever name he goes by at the time, he had put something out on Murderecords and Rich had a show at CKDU as well. CKDU was a real hub for crossover and meeting people, and then Sixtoo was another artist. Jo Run was someone who was sort of big in what I would consider the real hip hop scene in Halifax, not the crossover hip hop scene that would play with and open for more the indie rock stuff. And something I think about, I think there was a lot of attention to a certain scene, but there was definitely some other scenes that were doing some really great stuff that probably didn’t get the recognition it should have at the time because the media was interested in Sloan and Sub Pop, Geffen, any bands that had to do with that, but there was a lot of other great stuff, too.

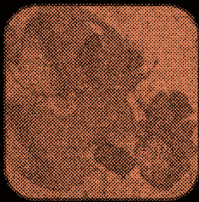


Do you think there are any barriers people faced in terms of getting into the Halifax music scene in the first place? Because I noticed with the rock scene specifically it was a very white scene, like there were not a lot of people of colour.

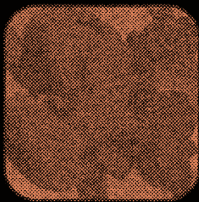
Yeah, for sure. I wouldn't presume there was people who necessarily wanted to penetrate that particular scene. There was a lot of people of colour making hip hop that I'm sure had no interest in joining that pop scene. They were making great music of their own. I'm sure they would have loved the type of attention, but I wouldn't presume they wanted to be on the same bills or playing at the same clubs. Halifax back then and probably now, I haven't lived there in a while, wasn't the best at cultural integration, but I would hope it's better now, but there were areas of town that black music would be booked every night of the week. It just at that time felt very separate and there wasn't a lot of people who had their fingers in both those types of scenes at the same time, but also in terms of penetrating the scene, if that's the kind of music you wanted to make and be a part of, I think for sure anyone who moved to Halifax who wasn't from there, there was maybe a bit of distrust at a certain point and a musical sensibility— let's just say the attention was there for a certain type of music and band and probably wasn't enough for people outside of that.



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When you were photographing these bands, who would you say were your favourites, like favourite bands or favourite people to photograph? Who were the easiest to work with and were there any bands that were on the other side kind of difficult to work with?

[Laugh] It's easier to work with people who like being photographed, and even if there's a band with three people who like it and one person who doesn't, it's still difficult to get that one shot. I would say Thrush Hermit was really fun to photograph because they were young and interested in that part of things and often had ideas and brought youthful energy and we just had a lot of fun with them. Sloan was always great because the ideas were there and very clear and my job was to go in and execute and make sure everyone looks good. I don't know if there's anyone I didn't like working with. I can't think. I did a lot of work for a magazine that used to be around called *Impact* out of Toronto and every month they would ask me to go photograph a different band from the region, and sometimes bands had just not been photographed before and didn't know what to do in front of the camera, and there's only so much I could do to relax people, and there's only so many times you can take pictures of the band in front of a brick wall or in an alleyway. So I definitely walked away from some shoots feeling uninspired and disappointed that I couldn't get what I wanted. But again, in a way, band members were like three models for me to shoot and test out my own ideas at some point.

I also found a skit that was uploaded on YouTube a while ago called *Canada Canada*. It was like a nineties Halifax art thing. Do you remember putting that video together?

Yeah, it was Canada Day. I'm not sure what year, but it probably says on the—it was in the nineties. **It was 1998.** Yeah. So I had this little Hi8 camera, it took cassettes that big [gestures with her index finger and thumb] and we did everything with, or I did, with in-camera edits. So you do a scene and press pause and then you move, set up another scene and press and shoot the next thing, and it was just a way for a bunch of friends who were all artistically inclined to spend a holiday together. No one had to work or go to school, and we gave each other characters and a little bit of character description and had a lot of fun. There's three of them. We also did an *Easter Easter* and a *Labour Labour* for Labour Day. I don't think they're on the internet yet. **So was that something you guys would do a lot, like make videos—** Yeah.— **in your spare time?** Yeah. [Laugh]. Yeah. It's funny. I look back at that time, like, did anyone work [laugh] and didn't we need money? But it was cheap to live, and a lot of people were students with part-time jobs. I'm sure it was very different at the time, but looking back, it feels like we just had free time and energy and just had fun.

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Were there any other known photographers in Halifax at the time? Because you were kind of the known one, I'm just wondering if there were other ones?

Yeah, a guy named Sam Cecil and a guy named Ingram Bars were also doing a lot of band photography, and Ingram and I shared a studio space for a while. Those are the names that come to mind. Sam shot a lot of live stuff. Ingram did some portraiture, not just music, but he did a little bit of music. But there was so many photographers coming out of the NSCAD photography program, but those were the three I think that really made a go of it, including myself.

And what were some bands or artists you knew that you felt deserved more recognition at that time?

I wouldn't say this was a personal thing for me, but there was a guy named Al Tuck who everyone, like a lot of the people on Murderecoreds, and Al was at one point, really looked to him as the best songwriter out there, and for whatever reason I think he wasn't really interested in self-promotion or touring or anything. He still plays, he has a bit of a career, but people look to him as really quality songwriting, and another guy named Matthew Grimson, who actually passed away a few years ago, but people really loved his stuff and Joel Plaskett put out some of his records that he had recorded 20 years ago or 30 years ago, now. (He) put some of that out recently on his own label.

